

# HEPATITIS C... OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

Pull myself together,  
Put on a new face  
Climb down off the hilltop  
Get back in the race  
*Greg Allman*



**ROBERTA RENICKER RN BSN MSA**

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
& SENIOR SERVICES

Jefferson City, Missouri

# Learning Objectives:

- List current treatment options and explore alternative or complimentary approaches to treatment
- Identify treatment challenges for clients in drug and alcohol recovery programs
- Discuss risk reduction strategies
- Learn ways to assist the client to overcome the social stigma of telling people about the disease

# Current Treatment Options

## ■ INTERFERON

- Protein that causes body's immune system to attack virus
- ***Patient is taught self injection***

## ■ PEGYLATED INTERFERON

- Long acting form

## ■ RIBAVIRIN

- Increases efficacy of Interferon
- Tablet form

## ■ **ALL HAVE MAJOR SIDE EFFECTS**



# Most Common Side Effects Of Interferon

- Fever, chills, muscle/joint pain, headache, chest pain, shortness of breath
- Fatigue, insomnia
- Nausea, vomiting
- Hair loss, dry itchy skin or rash
- Anxious, irritable, depressed
- Sometimes suicidal ideation
- Sometimes confusion

**Like being  
stepped on by  
an elephant!**



# Ways To Help Client Deal With Side Effects

- May want to tell people close to them that treatment may cause mood changes
- Joining a support group may help
- Avoid “triggers” that cause stress
- Learn ways to relax
- Eat healthy, get lots of rest, drink plenty of water
- Avoid too much caffeine, sugar and tobacco

# Alternative/Complimentary Approaches to Treatment

- Helps client to cope with side effects of treatment
- May reduce stress and decrease muscle aches
  - Aroma therapy
    - **CAUTION:** Some essential oils are strong – may worsen nausea
  - Massage Therapy
  - Meditation and Visualization
  - Yoga
    - **CAUTION:** Some exercises may be dangerous if liver is swollen

**ALWAYS CONSULT PHYSICIAN FIRST!**





# Some Alternative Treatments Can Be Dangerous To People with Liver Disease

- Herbs, supplements, “mega” vitamins
  - Liver may not be able to synthesize them
  - “NATURAL” does not mean “SAFE”
  - BEWARE OF SCAMS
    - Internet shopping
    - Promises to “cure”
    - **Treatments not available in U.S.**
    - **Very \$\$\$\$**

# PLAY IT SAFE...

## Tell your client to...

- ALWAYS consult the doctor first!
  - It's a mistake to use any treatment, even an alternative without expert advice.
- Consult a qualified practitioner/therapist
- Ask to see his/her education, license, or certification





# Treatment Challenges for Clients in Drug and Alcohol Recovery Programs



# Self injecting may trigger feelings of “using days”



## Remind client that...

- Interferon is healing the liver
- Being clean and sober is best thing to stay healthy with hepatitis C
- Encourage client to talk openly about feelings/fears of self-injecting
- Don't skip or change doses
  - Talk to physician first!
- Don't isolate when injecting
  - Be near trusted people

# Work with Client to Develop “Risk Reduction Plan”

- Identify risk factors unique to this client
  - Strategize to prevent recurrences
  - Discuss ways to prevent transmission
- Encourage screening/testing for other conditions – (HBV, HIV, STD'S & TB)
- Inquire into clients willingness to minimize infection
- Discuss any cultural issues/barriers
- Discuss any unsuccessful attempts at risk reduction
- Assist client to identify risk reduction strategies that he/she would be comfortable using (i.e. not reusing needles)



# Helping the Client to Cope with the Social Stigma of Hepatitis C

- When the client asks you...
  - Should I tell people I have hepatitis C?
  - Why should I tell?
  - Who should I tell?
  - What should I say?
  - When should I tell them?



# This may be helpful...



# Should I tell people I have hepatitis C?

- If you decide to tell someone, it's okay if you ask them to keep the information private.
- Very personal decision, but....
  - Can make a difference in how you feel and how you cope
  - Can affect relationships



# Why Should I Tell?

- People in your life can:
  - Offer Support
  - Help run errands for you
  - Help with childcare when you feel really sick
  - Help with housework, yard work
  - Learn more about the disease
  - Help you to prevent its spread

# Who Should I Tell?

- Doctor, nurse, dentist
- Family members
- Friends
- Employer
- Close contacts such as:
  - Sexual partner(s)
  - Needle-sharing partner(s)
  - Roommates(s)
    - These people may want to get tested too!
      - YOU can give THEM emotional support!

# What Should I Tell Them?

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- How you found out you have hepatitis C
- How the virus is spread
- How it is not spread
- Risk Factors
- A simple blood test can diagnose
- Medication available for treatment
  - Side effects



# When Should I Tell Them?

- The best time is when **YOU** are comfortable sharing this information.



# Risk Factors for Hepatitis C

- Snorting or injecting drugs
- Recipient of blood, organ transplant before 1992
- Exposure to needle sticks from injected person
- Sharing razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes or any item than can carry blood
- Tattoo needles and body-piercing implements
- Unprotected sexual activity
- Mother/baby transfer (slight risk)
- Vietnam Veterans
- Any exposure to blood

# Knowing your ABC's Help the Client to Develop a Personal Risk Inventory –

- **A – AWARENESS BUILDING**

- Clients participate with education group to identify behaviors which increase their risk

- **B – BECOME PROACTIVE TO REDUCE RISK**

- Identify actions that can be practiced to reduce risk

- **C – CONTINUE TO PRACTICE HEALTH BEHAVIORS**

- **D – DEVELOP ACTION PLAN TO CONTINUE HEALTHY BEHAVIORS**



# Personal Risk Inventory

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- Using Hepatitis C Risk Factors:
  - Identify what risk factors apply
  - What the client can do to decrease risk factors
  - Develop Action Plan
  - Develop Follow-up for Compliance

# The Epidemic of Hepatitis C...

- 8-10,000 deaths per year
- Death rate from Hepatitis C ---  
expected to triple in 15-20 years
- Expecting 30,000 deaths by end  
of this decade

Reference: American Liver Foundation

# Missouri

## Hepatitis C Morbidity

■ Year 1999	2474
■ Year 2000	4884
■ Year 2001	8447
■ Year 2002	5996!





# SOME LAST THOUGHTS...

- Currently, Hepatitis is EPIDEMIC in U.S.
- Protect yourself and the one's you love
- Get vaccinated for A and B
- Today's blood supply is safe!
  - Transfusion Risk: 1/120,000 units
    - Risk of death by car accident: 1/10,000
    - Risk of dying in fire/drowning: 1/95,000



# **Thank you!**

## **Any questions?**

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**Roberta Renicker RN BSN MSA**  
**Consultant Community Health Nurse**  
**Mo. Dept. of Health and Senior Services**  
**930 Wildwood Drive**  
**Jefferson City, Mo. 65102**  
**1-573-522-6052**  
**[renicr@dhss.state.mo.us](mailto:renicr@dhss.state.mo.us)**